

~~TOP SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

10 October 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Current Communist Air Capabilities in the Far East

We have reviewed Chinese Communist/North Korean and Soviet air capabilities for operations against UN forces in the Far East and have informally coordinated our findings with the Directorate of Intelligence, USAF.

CHINESE COMMUNIST/NORTH KOREAN AIR FORCES (CCAF/NKAF)

1. Aircraft Strength. The Chinese Communist and North Korean Air Forces are estimated to have available 1,330 aircraft in combat units, including 700 jet fighters. The augmentation of this force over the past year and the radius of action of the aircraft are shown in the following table:

	January	June	October	Approximate Radius of Action in Nautical Miles
Jet fighters	75	400	700	250-350
Piston fighters	250	200	250	440-540
Ground attack	190	170	160	165
Light bombers	150	130	120	500
Transports	<u>75</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	500
	740	1,000	1,330	

25X1

CONFIDENTIAL

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

The disposition of these aircraft is believed to be as follows:

CCAF in Manchuria	750 (including 440 jets)
NKAF in Manchuria	110
China proper (based principally in Peiping, Canton, and Shanghai)	<u>470</u> (including 260 jets)
	1,330

2. Combat Effectiveness. Aside from the increase in the number of aircraft, the combat effectiveness of the CCAF/NKAF has steadily improved as a result of: (a) an intensified training program; (b) combat experience gained in both night and day operations; (c) an extensive early warning radar network which has been established along the China Coast; and (d) early warning and ground controlled interception radars which have been installed in North Korea and Manchuria and are being effectively used in co-ordination with fighters for air defense. The area of jet interception activity over Korea has been extended steadily southward from the Yalu to the Pyongyang area. Despite these improvements, the general level of operational skill of the Communists still appears to be substantially below that of the United Nations. There is no evidence that the CCAF/NKAF have fully mastered the complex techniques and developed the facilities required for effective ground support. They have not conducted the extensive air reconnaissance over UN lines that would be necessary for adequate target selection and bombing accuracy. Furthermore, maintenance and supply difficulties probably would limit the availability of Communist air equipment for sustained operations.

3. Airfields. Airfields in Manchuria and China are adequate to sustain operations of the CCAF/NKAF from those areas, and limited airfield development has continued in North Korea despite intense and sustained UN aerial bombardment. However, the majority of North Korean airfields are suitable only for piston-engined planes, although some of them could possibly be used for limited jet operations. Logistic support of North Korean airfields is seriously hampered by the UN air interdiction of enemy lines of communications. As long as UN air superiority is maintained, enemy offensive and defensive operations will continue to be restricted.

CONFIDENTIAL

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 3 -

CONFIDENTIAL

4. Logistic Support. The CCAF/NKAF is almost completely dependent on the USSR for logistical support. All of the jet aircraft and most of the piston-engined aircraft in the CCAF/NKAF have been provided by the USSR. The bulk of all supplies is shipped via the Trans-Siberian Railroad to Siberia and then distributed by means of Chinese rail units. A smaller percentage of supplies appears to arrive by water transport at Canton, Shanghai, and Tsingtao for distribution by rail. The shortcomings of the transportation appear to impose no serious limitations on CCAF/NKAF air operations. Neither China nor North Korea possesses a significant capability to develop, manufacture, or meet the supply requirements of an air force.

5. Capabilities. The CCAF/NKAF is estimated to have the following capabilities:

- (a) To employ its entire fighter strength of 950 aircraft on air defense missions in China, Manchuria, and North Korea. Under conditions of sustained combat, those aircraft assigned to air defense missions could probably average one sortie per day per aircraft assigned in Manchuria and China. Aircraft operating from Manchuria and China over North Korea would have a reduced sortie capability because of the distance involved. The defensive capability over North Korea has been increasing steadily and UN air forces no longer have complete freedom of action along the lines of communication from Pyongyang to the Yalu.
- (b) To initiate offensive air operations against UN air, ground, and naval forces on the Korean peninsula and adjacent waters. From bases in Manchuria and China, the CCAF/NKAF bombers and piston-engined fighters could range over all of Korea and from certain bases they could strike the southern tip of Honshu and a part of Kyushu. The jet fighters have sufficient range to carry out attacks on nearly all of the Korean peninsula and adjacent waters. The ground attack type aircraft would have a very limited capability unless North Korean bases were used at least for staging. If North Korean bases became operational, CCAF/NKAF capabilities would be substantially increased. Although the Communists

CONFIDENTIAL

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 4 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

could employ their entire strength of 1,330 aircraft on offensive missions, it is unlikely that they would commit more than 800 aircraft in view of their overall defense requirements. Without consideration of combat attrition, they could probably average 400 sorties per day with this force on a sustained basis.

SOVIET FAR EAST AIR FORCES

6. Aircraft Strength. The USSR has the capability of committing a large portion of its Far Eastern Air Forces to Korean operations without delay. The Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces have an estimated Table of Organization and Equipment strength of 5,500 combat aircraft. (The actual strength is estimated to be about 85 percent of the TO and E strength, but it is believed that these units could be readily brought up to full strength.) These 5,500 aircraft are primarily of World War II types, but the USSR is now known to be equipping some units with jet fighters and can deploy additional jets to the Far East in a relatively short time.

7. Airfields. Of the total airfields, in the Sino-Soviet Far East 131 are within 500 miles of either the 38th Parallel in Korea or the Japanese islands of Honshu and Kyushu. These 131 airfields are capable of sustaining the entire Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces.

8. Logistic Support. The USSR has been stockpiling POL products, including jet fuel, in substantial quantities in the Far East. Providing no effective UN action were taken to disrupt Communist supply lines outside Korea, it is believed that the USSR could provide logistic support for its Far Eastern Air Force in the Korean theater.

9. Capabilities. If the Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces were deployed to bases adjacent to Korea, night bombing attacks could be carried out anywhere in Korea or Japan, and saturation-type day bomber operations could be launched throughout most of Korea. Although no TU-4's are currently known to be based in the Far East, they could be readily deployed there, considerably increasing enemy

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

- 5 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

air capabilities for saturation-type bomber operations and atomic attack on UN military installations in South Korea and Japan. With consideration for air defense and other missions, the Soviets could assign 2,000 combat aircraft for support of the Korean war. The sortie capability of this force could approximate 1,000 per day on a sustained basis.



25X1

WILLIAM L. LANGER
Assistant Director
National Estimates

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~TOP SECRET~~